

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

SHIFTING GEARS PROJECT
LAWRENCE

INFORMANT: JENNIE DISTEFANO
INTERVIEWER: YILDEREY ERDENER
DATE: APRIL 27, 1988

Y = YILDEREY
J = JENNIE

SG-LA-T531

Y: Is uh, (F: 27th?) 27th, April 27th, 1988. And uh, my guest is Jennie DiStefano.

J: Jennie DiStefano.

Y: Jennie, can you spell your name? Although I have written, you now, I wrote it down, but (--)

J: Oh, in deed. DiStefano, D I S T E F A N O.

Y: Yeah. And your birth date please?

J: May the 24th, 1911.

Y: Oh, you have a birthday soon. I should write a card.

J: I don't advertise it. (Laughs)

Y: Uh, you were born here (J: yeah) in Lawrence? (J: Yeah) Umhm. And can you tell me a little bit about your parents, and your brothers, sisters, and your other childhood.

J: My mother, my mother came she says in 1906. And you know, she was about fifteen, or sixteen, I don't remember what she said, you know, at that time. But she came here so she could make a trousseau so she could go back over and get married. She had a boyfriend there.

Y: In where?

J: In Italy.

Y: Italy. What part?

J: Sicily. (Y: Sicily, uh huh) But when she came here my father happened to be coming here to bring her a package from Europe. And he fell in love with her and they got married.

Y: But your father was not her boy friend?

J: No, it was somebody else. But she left the boyfriend, because he couldn't come by, he couldn't come. He tried three times she said, and he happened to have uh, something in his eyes. I don't know. If he didn't pass the vision they wouldn't let them in. So he had to go back. So then she decided, then she met my father and she married my father.

Y: Yeah. So your mother married your father. He was an Italian also? (J: Umhm) And uh, where did you live when you were a little girl?

J: I lived in Jackson Terrace, (Y: umhm) right off, near the common. You know where that is? Jackson Terrace? (Y: Yeah) It's between Newbury Street and Jackson Street.

Y: Yeah, how big was your family with you?

J: We were only two, my brother and I.

Y: Your brother and I, yeah. Can you (--)

J: And I was, I had a baby sister, but she died. And then me and my brother. So.

Y: Why did she die?

J: Oh, I don't know. Them days she died of, she had uh, I think it was whooping cough. Something like that.

Y: Do you remember the house you lived? Can you describe the inside, how it was? How many bedrooms and who lived where?

J: Oh, we had, there was four rooms besides the kitchen. And two were bedrooms, and one was just a den. And then we had a utility room. You know, to close door, and we kept everything in there. Odd things, you know, because we didn't have a cellar. I lived on the fourth floor. So we kept one room just for anything.

Y: Yeah. And you went to school, elementary school?

J: I went to the Holy Rosary School.

Y: Holy Rosary?

J: Umhm.

Y: Where is it?

J: Well it's on Summer Street, right in back of our house.

Y: I don't know this area well. (J: No?) That's why I ask such questions. And uh, (J: it's on Summer Street) you are, I see you are surprise that I don't (--)

J: It's still there.

Y: Umhm. So you graduated from that school?

J: The Holy Rosary. I graduated from there. And then I went to high school. But in high school I had to drop out, because my father died, he was only forty-seven. (Y: Why?) And my mother was only thirty-nine. So I had to stay home to mind my brother. (Y: Yeah) And my mother had to work.

Y: And how old were you?

J: I must (--) Well at the time I must have been about sixteen, seventeen.

Y: And you were going to high school? And then you dropped (--)

J: Well, somebody had to work. So my mother kept working. But I went to continuation school you know, then, and mind my brother till he went to school, because he was about ten years younger than I. See my father, when my father died I was about thirteen, and my brother was about five. So it was tough. Nobody asked for anything then. Nobody wanted hand downs. It's true!

Y: And uh, so your mother was working also, right?

J: My mother worked in the Wood Mill, yeah. And she worked in the english drawing?].

Y: Is she alive?

J: Is she alive? Oh no. (Y: no) My mother is gone. She's been gone about, well I say about eighteen years now. But we were close. I mean.

Y: So uh, you started where to work? I mean after your father died (--)

J: Oh yeah. Well then when my brother went to school and I started working when I was about sixteen, sixteen, seventeen.

Y: Umhm. Where did you start to work?

J: In the Wood Mill.

Y: Wood Mill? (J: umhm) Did you change the place, or you stayed (--)

J: Other places? (Y: I mean you worked?) No, I always worked in the Wood Mill in the [english drawing?], because it was very good.

Y: What was good there?

J: Pardon?

Y: What was good. I mean, what, you said it was very good.

J: Well it was different. There was no piece work. We were on time. It wasn't piece work, it was on time. And there was a lot of young people our age, you know, they were fifteen, sixteen, seventeen. And uh, we were doffers, what they call doffers. The women ran the machines and we were young girls and we had a lot of fun then, you know, because we were all the same age.

Y: Yeah, what kind of fun. Uh, can you tell me a little bit? I mean.

J: Well I mean just ordinary uh, not fun. We all talked, because when we were working they would make a noise on the machine that that means they wanted us. We were five doffers. And the people that ran the machine, every time they needed us to take the bobbins out, they called, they bang on the machine to make noise and they call us. And we all run there, five of us, and we had a section. Maybe the machine had about, maybe about one hundred and twenty spools. So we, we'd break that in five, five girls. So each girl would take her own section. So we carried about fourteen, fifteen spools, you know. We'd do it twice, because they were heavy. So we put them in back of the machine so the boys would pick them up after, later on, and they'd put them in the trucks that take them to the spinning room. And then we go and sit down in back of the machine and just talk, because, wait to the next banging. So it wasn't really, my place was good. I can't say that it was bad, you know?

Y: Uh, right. I mean what did you talk about? Did you uh, I'm interested to hear if you told each other jokes, or if you used to sing songs. Or how did you, how did you spend?

J: Oh yeah. One time, one time we were singing songs. Oh, we used to sing songs. One time I remember we were looking out the window, we had nothing to do, and we were singing Bye Bye Blackbird. And the superintendent of the mill saw us. He didn't say nothing. And the next thing we knew, the boss came over and told us to stay out for the week, because we were singing out the window.

Y: So it was a punishment?

J: Yeah, just for singing. But I mean we took it as a joke. Because we figured, oh, we had a day off. [Chuckles] You know? Because we weren't responsible to make the money, our mothers were. So we, we enjoyed it because we were young. We didn't think nothing of it.

Y: You were sixteen you said?

J: Well sixteen, seventeen, but we didn't care, you know? If my mother got punished that would have been different. She would have taking it out (--)

Y: And you didn't stay, I'm trying to find out if people told each other jokes you know, in those days. You don't remember uh (--)

J: No, we danced, or we (--)

Y: Dance at the work place?

J: In back of the machine when nobody was looking. Learn each other's steps. At that age there were a lot of girls liked dancing.

Y: Umhm. What kind of dances were in then? I mean the tango, or(--)

J: Well any kind of dance. Well at that time they did the black bottom. No, no, they used to have the Charleston. The black bottom was, you know, different kind of dance. It isn't like the jitterbug, but that's what they did then. And we learned each other's steps. And uh, that's about all, you know.

Y: What kind of songs? Can you sing me a song?

J: Oh I don't remember. Oh, that's too far. Well like I said, we sang Bye Bye Blackbird and we got fired. Not fired.

Y: I mean Italian songs, or American songs?

J: No. We didn't (--) No. See, we didn't speak Italian to anybody, just our mother and father when we were in the home.

Y: But I thought there were many Italian people at Wood Mill

J: No, we didn't speak to each other in Italian. Not the girls. I men anybody that grew up with us.

Y: Yeah.

J: We didn't.

Y: For example, your friend uh, Adali, or Leni, you did not talk to her Italian?

J: No, because she wasn't working close to me. And if we did we didn't speak Italian. I mean to none of our girlfriends, because we all went to school here. I mean we didn't practice it, you know? But when we weren't home we had to talk and speak it. It was a must then.

Y: And I heard that some people used to go to the ladies room and sing there and teach each other (--)

J: Oh we used to teach each other crochet. (Y: Crochet?) Crochet. Or uh, I used to be very good in doing hair, you know, not that I went to school. But the girls that had curly, curly hair, they wanted it straight. And I'd wet them and then I'd put [few word unclear]. I used to train them every morning, you know, while we had nothing to do. But we were always on the watch out if the girls called us to you know, to work on the machines. (Y: Yeah) See we didn't run the machine, we just were doffers then. Then when I got to be eighteen, nineteen, they gave me a machine which I, of course it was three dollars more. At that time we were getting \$13.25 believe it or not. That's our pay for (Y: a week) the week!

Y: What time was, what year was that? (J: Hm?) What year was that if you (--)

J: Well maybe 1922, 23, I don't know.

Y: What did you, what was your birth?

J: Oh no, wait a minute. Um, maybe before 1930. Between that time.

Y: So if you started when you were sixteen years old, and it must be the 1927, 28.

J: Yeah, between the '20, after the '25th. Between then and between the '30, because I got married in '32. 1932.

Y: And some people also said that they used to teach each other dance steps. One lady said I learned all of the dance steps in the bathroom.

J: Sure. In the bathroom, or in back of the machines. You know, [Unclear] where there was a big isle maybe from here to the other room, in between. And then they'd be two more machines, you know? So we had plenty of room.

Y: Yeah. They did not see you?

J: Well they didn't (--) We'd be on the watch out, you know? Or we'd go to the bathroom like you said. Or in noontime. In noontime we'd do it. We used to dance between us. Not in, you know, not with the boys.

Y: Why not, I mean with the boys?

J: Well we didn't. I don't know, because the boys, all the boys used to go out and smoke. And uh, the girls didn't go out, or they had their lunch. My mother worked there, I'd go see my mother. She had here, this is where she kept an eye on me. [Laughs] You know? You know.

Y: So the boys were then in, they did things with themselves?

J: Well the boys(--) No, no, they didn't stay with us. No, no. They worked in other machines, because they used to put the bobbins in. (Y: Yeah) See, when the bobbins all ran out (Y: umhm), and the girl took care, the girl that took care of the machine she used to you know, finish the work. She, the boys would come over and fill her machine again. That machine would be like four strands, two strand going into one. And there was four spools. And there was I don't know how many spools. Maybe 180. Something like that. About a hundred. Maybe, you know, I can't recall the number.

Y: But you were singing and doing other things, because you did not work piece work.

J: No, we weren't, we were on time work.

Y: And later when you got the machine, was it the same?

J: No, we just watched the machine, make sure that it didn't tangle.

Y: Oh, I see.

J: The bobbin, the yarn, it didn't break. If it broke, you know, one of the ends, we stop it, tie it, and start it again. But when the bobbins fill at the bobbin, we stopped them, or they stopped alone. Some stopped alone. Or we stopped them when they were full and then we called the doffers.

Y: So you were uh (--)

J: See I did both. Well when I was young I did doffing and then I had my own machine.

Y: Yeah, but both times you paid daily. They did not pay you piece work?

J: No, no, no. The week, we worked the whole week, or by the day. But they didn't pay us by the day. They used to keep our time. (Y: Yeah, right, right, right) You know, like we used to work from six-thirty, seven, or whatever. I don't remember the time. I think it was six-thirty to two thirty, or three o'clock. I don't remember, but it was eight hours.

Y: Eight hours a day? (J: Yeah) But not Saturdays and uh, (--)

J: No. In the beginning I worked Saturday up the twelve. Then they took that off and we worked till Friday night. And if we worked Saturday it would be a little overtime, because uh, until the forty, we used to work forty-eight hours.

Y: Did you work forty-eight hours?

J: Yeah, in the beginning. (Y: Why did you?) Well that's the time they had.

Y: Why did you go to Wood Mill, not Arlington Mill? I mean why, what was the reason to

choose?

J: Well because the Wood Mill would be right off, going to South Lawrence. It's closer. Where Arlington Mill would be on [unclear].

Y: I mean Arlington Mill is just an example. What I was I guess (--)

J: Well because my mother worked there. And that's the reason you go there, because you know, you go in the morning with your mother?

Y: But how did you get the job? Did your mother (--)

J: Oh I just, you just apply, you know? I, we used to go work, we used to go in the morning if you were looking for a job. And uh, we'd wait in a group in a corner, or somewhere in the room, until the boss would come out of his room. And he would say um, well pick on three, you know, or whoever he liked. I mean he just looked at you. I suppose he could tell who wanted a job. The time I went we were about ten girls. And he told me to go in his room, and got my name. And he asked me who was there. And I told him my mother worked there. And that's about all. And he told me to come in the next day.

Y: So he must have liked your face then?

J: I suppose so, I don't know.

Y: I mean how else (--)

J: We were young. Well yeah, well they had to take a pick, or whatever. Or sometime if there was only two, he needed one, he'd pick one. I don't know if he looked at us. I image he did. I do know.

Y: Yeah, I don't mean sexually, but uh, (--)

J: Yeah, I know what you mean. I suppose, you know? I suppose.

Y: Because uh, sometimes people say, my mother used to work there and she talked to the boss. And uh, but it wasn't the case with you.

J: Yeah. Well yeah. But see, my mother didn't speak english. She just took me in and they knew. They knew that somebody brought them in, you know? Then they would ask.

Y: Yeah. And at work were there other Italian girls?

J: Oh yeah, sure!

Y: Did you interact with other groups, other nationalities?

J: Oh yeah, sure. Yeah, we did.

Y: What other, what kind?

J: Polish, German, French, but our mothers kept more to themselves. If they were Italian people, they kept with Italian people. But the younger people didn't do that. I mean we didn't I mean I had friends that came from Naples. They came from, one French girl, two Polish girls. I'm still friendly with one French girl. Yeah! After all those years. I call her to see how she's doing.

Y: Could you date Polish guys? Or could you date on those days?

J: No!

Y: Go out with Polish, or Lithuanian, or other?

J: Well if you did, if you did you wouldn't (--) I mean if you asked for a date because he was Polish, or he was another nationality, you figured it was a waste of time. You know. (Y: Why?) Well probably your mother wouldn't let you date him? You know?

Y: They wouldn't let you marry other nationality?

J: No, not (--) It happened.

Y: I mean not personally you. You know, you are talking in general.

J: No, no, I understand. Yeah, but they did. A lot of them inter married, they married, but not very much. Not too many. Because they, if they had any dances, like our mother's, if they like a dance, what did you meet? You meet Italian boys. Once a year we used to have a dance, our mother, like a club.

Y: Where was that?

J: Uh, well it used to be on Newbury Street. And we used to have, once a year we used to have like a big party. And naturally, if you meet, you meet the friends that you know. The children of the people you know. And that's how it used to happen. But sometimes it did happen that you'd fall in love with somebody else. And I, I remember a boy asked me for a date. Because he wasn't Italian I didn't date him myself. I says, oh no! I can't go out with you.

Y: What about the other girls, other Italian girls?

J: Well some, some could. I mean they weren't, their parents probably weren't that strict. You know. You find that everywhere. But our folks were very strict. Italian people are more, I think they were more strict than different, than different nationalities. Because I, I could never go to the dance unless I had somebody with me. Commodore. At that time they used to have Canobie Lake. They had dancing there.

Y: What is the name?

J: At Canobie Lake.

Y: Where was that?

J: In New Hampshire. Salem, New Hampshire. Uh, it was like um, they used to have ballroom dancing. And we had all of the orchestras coming from far away. I couldn't go until I got engaged.

Y: Could you go there alone by yourself?

J: Oh no, no. You go with another friend.

Y: A girlfriend, or?

J: A girlfriend. You couldn't go alone with the boyfriend. (Y: No?) No. No. Not unless you, unless the mother and father didn't know about it. You know, they take a bus and they go, during the day, but at night unless you go with some friends, then you go with them. And they let you go, because there was other people there.

Y: Right. So when you go out, did you go out at night time, or? (J: No, no) I mean with your girlfriends.

J: No. Not even there. We used to go downtown shopping. Saturday we'd shop all afternoon, but we didn't go out at night. I didn't.

Y: Yeah. Even not with your (J: boyfriend, no) girlfriends?

J: No. We'd take a walk around the common. We'd be 7:00 the latest. But before 8:30-9:00 we had to be home. When the lights went on everybody had to be home. That's how we were brought up.

Y: That's a good rule. I like that.

J: And tell you the truth, my boys, I had three boys, my husband, he didn't like to, he didn't want to see those kids outside. They used to play ball. If they went to the park they had to be around the house at 9:00. So that it wasn't because, until they were sixteen they had to be around the house. So we went through (--) I mean the boys didn't mind, because that's my husband's law.

Y: That's a good law. The other day you told me you used to call Wood Mill (--)

J: The Academy. Well that was to be funny.

Y: Yeah, as a joke.

J: The Wood Mill Academy, yeah.

Y: Wood Mill Academy? (J: Yeah, as a joke) Why did you, you said you learned a lot of things there, or something, you made a comment. I don't remember exactly. I mean what was the reason why you called it as a joke?

J: Because we couldn't go back to (--) Nobody went to college. Very few. (Y: Yeah) So that was our college degree. Not that we got anything out of it, but we meant that we didn't go any further. You know?

Y: Yeah. You also told me that you had long hair, and then became a little lady, or something you said.

J: I didn't (--) I had long hair until I got married.

Y: But you, I thought you said (--)

J: We used to braid them.

Y: Can you tell me about how you looked before the first day you started? Uh, do you remember the first day at the mill?

J: Oh yeah. The first day I started to work I went with my long, I had my long hair and I had my bow in the back. At that time they used to wear short clothes, you know, just like now.

Y: Why didn't you let your hair down?

J: Because that was the style. What was I going to do with it. That was my hair. (Y: Yeah) So then the boss told us, anybody had long hair to put it up if you wanted to work there. (Y: why?) On account if you had pullers. The machine used to run by electric pullers. And he was afraid our hair would get caught. And you know, when you go by you never know. The hair flies. Not in the front. He didn't care how short it was in the front, as long as the back of the hair was tied up. So we did that. I braided it after. And um, I used to keep it pinned up, you know? Pinned around my head like that.

Y: What about jewelry.

J: Huh? jewelry? Well if you wanted to wear jewelry you could. They didn't stop you. There wasn't any danger. No, no. As long as there wasn't swinging, you know, too much. No, nobody ever stopped. Of course you didn't wear too much jewelry to work. Maybe a pearl or something, but not too much, too out. No. At night we wear it when we go to the dance. Earrings, you know. We have more, most of the girls then they had pierced ears. So they wear their gold earring. We didn't change around like we do now. Yeah.

Y: What about baggy clothes? You know, big uh (--)

J: Coat?

Y: No, during uh, at the work? Could you wear um, baggy clothes? I'm talking about, what I'm talking about is the safety? You know, how the bosses, what did they do? How did they warn you?

J: No, we had our own, we came in with the cotton house coat. You know, like a cotton dress. Blouses, skirt. Some people used to put a little front apron. You know, a tea, like a tea apron for not to get dirty. But uh, we didn't. The young girls didn't, because we changed everyday, you know.

Y: Although it was long time ago, uh, the first day, you started talking about the first day? How, what was the impression when you walked in?

J: Well first impression we thought it was awful noisy. Drowned us, the noise drowned our ears. But that's because all the machines are running. You know? So when we talked to each other we had to yell. And if we yell and when we'd go home we started, we were talking loud again. And that's why a lot of people, probably a lot of people lost their ear drums. I don't know. It could happen, (Y: yeah) because it was very noisy. You have no idea.

Y: You couldn't hear the next uh (--)

J: No, no. Well maybe from here to outside that door you couldn't hear, unless you were yelling.

Y: Which is two yards or less.

J: Yeah, unless you were yelling.

Y: Yeah. So you said (--)

J: Or we just go with our mouth, you know, motions. Come here, you know? Or we make motions. That's why we all talk with our hands. Come here, you know? They know what we're talking about.

Y: The other day you said that's why we talk loud now.

J: Now, it's true because on account of the noise. Yeah. Because you work thirty, you know, from morning till night you're yelling if you're talking to anybody, unless somebody was right near you.

Y: And so what about the big belts in the machines? Did you notice them?

J: Well they'd be in the middle. They'd be uh, the two machines meet like that, they'd be in the middle. You know, and well they were pulleys. One like a wheel at the bottom, and maybe

wheels on the top. And they'd be the stripe going back and forth, it was going all the time. It used to go all the time the pulleys. Even if you stop the machine at noontime, those pulleys would still be going.

Y: What do you call, pullets?

J: They call them pulleys, I don't know what they (--)

Y: Pulleys?

J: Yeah. I mean that's what they used to call them.

Y: Yeah. And uh, did you hear(--)

J: Instead of being long like that, they were up on the, on the ceiling and coming down. We didn't have them long wise that you could touch them. They'd be long like that. That's why you had to be careful when you're going by the machines.

Y: What could happen?

J: Well you'd get your, your clothes would be swept away. You know? Well it would make you fall or something, of course. But everybody, there wasn't that much accidents. Only one woman I, my mother told me that it pulled her hair. You know.

Y: What [unclear], do you remember?

J: I don't remember.

Y: I mean you did not see it, but what was the story you heard.

J: I didn't see it. The story went that she had long hair and she was told to put it up, and she didn't. And when she went by the machine, the machine pulled her hair. And of course, of course somebody saw it, the screams. They stopped the machine, but it did pull her hair from her sculpt. Not all of it, but a lot. But I didn't see it. It was told, you know, it was reported to us. And I imagine, someone must have seen it. And that, I think that happened in the spinning room. I'm not sure. It didn't happen where we were.

Y: Umhm. Yeah, were there other stories like that you heard from other friends, other mills, other um, I mean (--)

J: I myself, that's the only time I heard of it, you know. I mean everybody was careful. You know. If they were, the girls sometimes if they were rough, you know, I mean nobody could watch anybody. Everybody was on their own.

Y: So when you started it was 1927 we figured out.

J: Yeah, about that time.

Y: 1927. How were the machines, operating with electricity? With the power?

J: Oh yeah, yeah! Power they got from the Merrimack River. The power came from the cellar.
(Y: Yeah) I don't know how. They had their own generators then. Must have, I don't know.
(Y: Yeah) Because there was a big mill, you know that. Now it's half of it, because they threw one half down.

Y: Right. And uh, you know, we are talking about the conditions, how they changed while you were working, although it is hard to remember everything because it is a long time ago. So when you started as a young girl, sixteen, seventeen years old, and then how long, how many years did you work?

J: I worked there until I had my, until let's see. Off and on. I didn't work steady, because I had my second, after my third son I didn't go back anymore. So he's uh (--).

Y: I mean more or less. You don't need to be (--)

J: Well it was about thirty years.

Y: Thirty years, yeah. Yeah.

J: Maybe. In all. In all.

Y: Right, right. Yeah. And in those years when you first started, what were the conditions and then how did it change? I mean although it is hard to answer such a question, I realize that.

J: Oh they change. Yeah, I understand. Yeah. Well the condition, they (--)

Y: What is your impression now of the changes.

J: When I got married there was a big strike. Not a strike, a depression.

Y: Yeah, it was 1930's I guess.

J: '32 I got married. And then it started from 1930, but it was still, it was still on um, what do you call it now, depression. (Y: Recession) Well we used to call it depression.

Y: Depression. So let's uh, you got married in 1932. (J: Uh huh) Umhm. Okay, that was still, the depression was still going on.

J: It still was in depression.

Y: Right, yeah.

J: Uh, but when I got married, when I come back from my honeymoon we went back to work. And I was out nine weeks. There was no work at all. But if we went in, we used to go in in the morning. And they said to you, they don't need you today. And we'd go back home.

tape I, side I ends

tape I, side II begins.

J: We come back with twenty-five dollars from our honeymoon.

Y: What did you do for your honeymoon?

J: Well we went to New York. (Y: New York?) Oh yeah! Well see my, my husband was a barber. And my mother-in-law, I mean they gave us their house. It was the third, second floor. She send the people out. That was their house. You know, they owned it.

Y: So you did not work at the mill?

J: I, (--)

Y: He was, he, your husband.

J: I, it still (--) My husband was a barber. He worked in the mill and he was a barber at night, Tuesday.

Y: Oh, he was a barber at the mill?

J: No, in a shop. He worked for somebody. (Y: Oh I see. Uh huh) At night. (Y: Uh huh) In fact they were opened at night until 6:00 then. 9:00 then, Tuesday night. And then he'd go to the barber shop Friday night and Saturday. But so, we were lucky we always had a little money to spend. You know, to buy food. My mother-in-law wouldn't let us pay for the oil. At that time we had like uh, coke. Coal, and she'd buy the coal for the two of us, for the two floors.

Y: She used to live with you, or?

J: Downstairs, the first floor.

Y: First floor, she used (--)

J: She lived, and I lived on the second floor.

Y: Yeah. No problems with uh (--)

J: No, I had no problems with my mother-in-law, because she had two sons and she always had, I was her favorite, you know? I mean she took me as a daughter. I was very lucky. I'm one of

the lucky ones I guess.

Y: She was also lucky that she had you.

J: Well she was nice to me. (Y: You can look at that) And I was, I would treat her as my husband's mother. So I treated her good just like my mother. I had no problems.

Y: So you went to New York for a honeymoon? (J: yeah, yeah) And then (--)

J: They had the money. I mean they paid everything. (Y: your?) I mean my husband did.

Y: And you came back, there was no job?

J: Nothing, no. My husband worked, went back, he used to work one day, maybe two days, but he always had that barber shop to fall on. So we always had, you know, we always could arrange it, you know?

Y: Yeah. But wasn't it depressing. I mean you start a new life and then you know, you come back and they say, well there's no job, I'm sorry.

J: Yeah but, yeah, I know. But we figured it was going to start someday, you know.

Y: You are not depressed or uh, (--)

J: No, no, no, because see, my mother, once a week she'd come up with a bag of food. My mother-in-law used to cook and she'd call us down. I was, I'll tell you I was lucky. We were lucky, I didn't feel it that much. What's to feel. We didn't buy nothing, we had everything new. My husband bought, my hus(--) At that time my mother-in-law bought all my furniture. So we had no bills at that time.

Y: Well you were, you were lucky that you had such a mother-in-law and so forth. (J: And my mother) Your mother.

J: My mother, see my mother, I didn't have a father, but my mother, we were close. If she made a dish of spaghetti, we'd go there.

Y: Yeah. Well I wonder how, if you wouldn't have such nice people around, how would you feel, you now, how would it have felt.

J: Well I remember that they had lines to go get the butter. To go get the bread, the milk. I remember. But I, I ourselves never went, but there was people when I went to school, that they uh, they went. This used to be maybe 19, in the twenties. There still was a lot of people that did.

Y: Yeah, what is your husband's name?

J: Especially when they had strike, you know, the mills would go on strike? Then the union

came in, in the mills? The union came in about maybe 1939. (Background voice: sorry?) Okay. Maybe 1939 the union came into the mills. And uh, they want to make things better. (Y: Did they?) They did to a certain extent. But then I think a lot of times the union can spoil the mills, because they make the people very unhappy too. Because they figure they could promise them more, but then what happened, they moved the mill down south, because the people were making the woolen cheaper. So all our mills went down south. The Washington Mill, the Wood Mill, and that must have been in the forties at that time. And the mills were going down and down and down. I worked until I had my third son, like I was telling you. My husband always worked in the card room, and he had the barber shop. So at that time probably they were making twenty-five dollars, maybe twenty(--) I don't remember exactly, you know? And then the pays did go up, but there was no work. So what good was it? I mean we struggled I mean to get there, but some of the ones that had a lot of children was harder. And some of the fathers weren't such good providers either. Probably they take their pay and they spend it. You know, there used to be a lot of those people. At that time my father was a, like um, like a guard, I don't know what they used to call them, in the Paper Mill. I remember my father always got more money than the others at that time. Even if it was two dollars more. You know, my father worked in the Wood Mill until he got sick. And then he went to Europe for a cure and never come back. That's what happened at that time. He was um, he was forty-seven.

Y: What did you say he had?

J: It, then he had cancer, but he didn't tell us in the letter. Because my mother couldn't go back, couldn't go there, because who was going to support us there if my father didn't work? So, but my father always encouraged us that he was coming back as soon as he'd be feeling good.

Y: Where did he go? To Italy?

J: Pardon?

Y: Where did he go? to Italy?

J: Yes, he went to Sicily, (Y: Sicily. You're from Sicily, right?) because he had (--) Yeah, no, yeah. (Y: I mean your parents) Yeah, umhm.

Y: So did you belong to the union?

J: Yes, then I went in to the union. I went into the union, because (Y: which one, do you remember?), because then it was a closed shop. We had to go in the union. If they didn't go in the union they wouldn't even give you a days work. You know, they'd hire the people that were in the union first.

Y: Which one was that? There were three, there were different union there.

J: Yeah, the Malgamate. No, no, what did they call it? I can't recall. CIO? No.

Y: The AFL?

J: No, no. There's another one.

Y: Uh, not important. That's fine.

J: Yeah okay, but I, I don't remember, but it was one big, you know. And then we had a strike.

Y: When was that?

J: the strike must have been, it was before I got married, because I was engaged. So it must have been from '30, '31 to '32. It must have been, because I got married in '32. So it must have been '31. Between '30 and '30 you know. That year there used to be strikes a lot. In fact (--)

Y: At the Wood Mill?

J: Yes! All over. Shawsheen. And when my husband heard that there was going to be a strike, he came downstairs to tell me to go right straight home. But I thought it was fun. And I was marching. I thought it was fun, and I started going out with them.

Y: What did they do? I mean how did they strike?

J: Nothing. They just run out of the mill and they stopped, they stopped the machine from running. They wouldn't work, and then go out on the street and they'd march. The ones from the Wood Mill would march, well I mean a group, and they'd go to the Shawsheen and tell the people to come out, because we wanted more money, or more hours. I don't remember why? You know, to tell you the truth I don't even remember why we went out. One said go out and we all went out. (Y: Right) You know? We were afraid to stay in, because somebody might hurt us. So we went out. But my husband said, you go right home! But I didn't. I went out. I thought it was nice to go out with them.

Y: Do you remember who organized that?

J: Well the CIO. Oh that's what it was, the CIO. I don't know what it means.

Y: The CIO, yeah.

J: Yeah, that was the union. And one, like a delegate would come over and say, everybody go out at ten o'clock, or whatever. And we all stopped the machine and went out. We wouldn't work. So naturally they lose money.

Y: After they came, the union came in, could they still tell you, well we don't need you, go home? Do you know what I (--)

J: Well if there, yeah, if there was no work, if there was, (--) Regardless, it took a long long time. If there was no work they'd send you home.

Y: But it doesn't matter whether (--)

J: No, it didn't, it didn't, that didn't affect them. I mean (--)

Y: Did they pay you for those days?

J: Of course not. You know.

Y: Yeah. So it is, you know, um,(--)

J: It didn't help them much. It helped with the wages. It helped with the hours. (Y: Umhm) But if there was no work in the shop where the boss didn't need you, you go home.

Y: Who is the boss? You say boss? Who is the boss? Who was the boss?

J: Well I remember(--)

Y: Overseers, (J: Well each room had) or ?

J: Overseers. Everybody had a different boss. Each room. [Unclear] We used to call them, it was an overseer. And then we had one big one that came from the office, and everybody was afraid when he used to go by, because that was the head one. You know?

Y: Did you talk to those big people?

J: No, no, no.

Y: Did you see them from time to time?

J: We'd see them from far away.

Y: But then never talked to the workers?

J: No, no, they didn't talk to the workers. No.

Y: Yeah.

J: They say good morning, they smile, you know, from far away. But everybody kept busy. When they saw they were coming, everybody passed the word around.

Y: No dancing and no singing. [Laughs]

J: No! Everybody was watching the machines, you know. Of course, I mean it was only normal.

Y: Right. Yeah. And uh, before you forget, or before I forget to ask you, you were talking

about this thousand dollars business this morning with the lady. What is it? Can you tell me what the discussion was?

J: Yeah. That year, well that year I, I wasn't working(--)

Y: What year? The closing date (--)

J: Well before the closing date. I guess the word, they knew they were going to close down. And what they did is that year anybody that was close to sixty-five, either they give them three months pay, or if they want to quit, you know, if they wanted to quit, they quit. And they would give them a thousand dollars. They were called in and they were going to give them a check for a thousand dollars. But at that time, like I told you, a lot of people say they weren't sixty-five. And as soon as they heard the rumor everybody turned sixty-five. But they went according to your certificates, you know. But a few did get it.

Y: Your mother, your mother (--)

J: My mother was one of them.

Y: Umhm. So she's retired in a way from (--)

J: She retired because at that time my brother got married and they had a baby. And she figured this was a good time to retire. They can work and I stay home. (Y: Yeah) So that's what she did. I was home at the time, because then I had my, I had my other son. There was three boys and a girl I had. Four. So I was home until my daughter went to school. I didn't make my mother mind her either. Well like I said, my husband then went to work. He was always working more or less the carding room. Men's place had more work. You know. And if he, like I said, if he didn't work at the mill he was in the barber shop.

Y: Yeah. And uh, you were talking about changes you know, over the years. So first day you started, and then you quit and came back, and up, and in and out. (J: Yeah) And you must have noticed those changes better than people who continues to work there, because you were out and in? (J: Well) What can you say?

J: For a long long time there wasn't any changes.

Y: I mean in terms of conditions inside the mill, or machines, or?

J: No, the machines kept about the same. (Y: Yeah?) Oh yeah. I mean until they took them out. I never saw any changes in machines.

Y: Yeah, someone said when they put modern machines, automatic machines, (J: modern?) modern.

J: Well see we didn't have that.

Y: You did not?

J: No.

Y: At uh (--)

J: Maybe the winders, I don't know. Not us.

Y: Where, where were you working?

J: I was in the english drawing.

Y: What did you do?

J: I told you. Either we looked at the machines, they used to come in to the (--)

Y: Yeah, right. I mean you did the same thing throughout the (--)

J: Yeah! Up to until they had took the machines out. You know, maybe the type of yarn changed, you know, but not the machines. The machines were the same.

Y: Uh huh. Did you notice those yarn changes?

J: Well some had silk, some of them we put two colors on it. You know, different thinks like that. The texture. Um, nothing, we didn't have cotton then. It was all wool.

Y: Do you remember the blue surge type of (--)

J: Yeah.

Y: When was that? They stopped sometime producing so much. I was told that one time, at one time they produced miles after miles this blue surge. And then suddenly they stopped and they did other things. Do you remember?

J: Well because they, then they did synthetic, you know, a little synthetic in it. (Y: Umhm) But see where it started from each one worked in their own department. So we don't know what went on in other rooms. You know what I mean. There used to be the spooling. My husband worked in the card room, where the wool come from the sheep, right. And they put it in a box, or something, and then it's to come out like um, like a tube. All fluffy fluffy, and it's to come out like a, well I say as big as that, like all, altogether. [A knock on the door]

Y: Yes.

J: Yes, come in. So that's why I didn't go back steady at the mills, because in the mills you can't do that. You know?

Y: So you had four children. Right? And each time you had the baby you stopped for awhile.

J: I stopped for about a year, or two.

Y: Uh huh, and then went back.

J: Yeah, and have a baby sitter.

Y: Baby sitter. So uh, when you went back you, actually you did not see what kind of product you did?

J: No, there wasn't, there wasn't that big change. The change was in the money. I mean they gave you more money, but the type of work where I work was about the same.

Y: Yeah, what I meant was you did not see what you produced. The fabric, did you see?

J: No, unless we went to the uh, unless we went upstairs to see. A lot of times we used to go upstairs where they have, where they used to do, what is it? I don't know how, what they called it, or where they make the cloth. And we'd go up to look at it. At noontime we could go up.

Y: So you were curious what kind of (--)

J: Oh yeah! We could go. At noontime we used to go visit what type of work it was. But it, it didn't phase, we didn't care. And then they used to have a place where they have the bolts with all the surging machines and the yarn. And we could buy the yarn already finished. Well it was in our room, it wasn't finished. We had bobbins, but it wasn't finished. You know what I mean?

Y: Umhm. Now you are talking about your husband work when [unclear].

J: Yeah, well see, I guess it came from the sheep in big sacks. And then they have these combing rooms. They put them in there and they come out, and they come out fluffy. It wouldn't be like a yearn or thread, it was uh, well as big as that really. All fluffy fluffy. And draws, it used to draw it into thinner and thinner, you know? And it's to twist until it's to make a thread. (Y: Umhm) It was fun. It was curious. It was amazing to see the difference. Now you could go to the textile, you know they have a museum? You know where the museum is. Uh, they have the machines there that you could just see how you know, it's interesting to look at them.

Y: Yeah, yeah. (J: You know?) So you did not care actually what kind of fabric you produced. You cared you know, what you get paid, right?

J: Yeah. We didn't care what type of work they did. I mean we didn't, we just ran the machine and that's all we did. If we wanted to buy some material, we'd go to the office, get a paper you know, that we want to go to the office where they have the material. And we got there and buy whatever you want. But you couldn't you know, you couldn't buy without having a slip.

Y: You seem to know about the, the year of social security. This morning you were talking about that to the other lady. It was Louise, or (--)

J: Yeah. You mean when we used to get our checks. (Y: You said) Well it wasn't security, it was um, what did they used to call it? Unemployment. We'd go, anybody who was unemployed would go there.

Y: Where? Where was this office?

J: It used to be under the bridge before. It was like the Social Security.

Y: Which bridge was that?

J: Uh, you know, by the Central Bridge?

Y: Oh yeah.

J: Well that was a long time ago. (Y: Yeah) And now they have, then they moved to, on Exeter Street.

Y: So there was an office there?

J: Yeah, big big building.

Y: Unemployment office.

J: Yeah, Unemployment Office. And if you, but that was lately. I mean maybe in the 50's, I don't know, if we were out of work.

Y: It must be earlier than that. About (--)

J: Well I don't know when it started, the unemployment, but they didn't give you nothing. No, the union did. I mean they were obligated, and um, but you wait in line. And then they get to say, well I have no work. And uh, probably they give you something for each week.

Y: Unemployment Office?

J: Unemployment. In the office. Not right there, they send you a check at home.

Y: Yeah. So for how long could you get that?

J: Well they, they know the type. If you worked that much, you get that much. I mean maybe ten weeks, maybe twenty weeks. It depends.

Y: Yeah. Did you get any such checks?

J: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. We used to go. If I, I was out of work I'd go look at the Unemployment Office. And they'd figure it out. And they send you a check. But in the meantime you had to look for a job.

Y: How do you proof that?

J: Well we'd go up to maybe two of the sewing place, or something. We'd know we wouldn't get hired. (Y: Yeah) And we'd tell them we've been there. And we did, you know. One time I went to the Arlington Mill to look for a job. I really didn't want to work there, but I went because I figured I could tell them I went there. I said, well they took our word for it, or they called the office. They called, is anybody, you know, how many people did you have coming in? They know? They knew, but some girls were very nice in the office, they know that you went and looked for work, you know?

Y: Yeah. What about the insurance? Health Insurance?

J: We didn't have any health insurance. (Y: No?) We had, if you have it you have your own. No. Everybody paid their own.

Y: I thought in 1935.

J: I don't remember when they did it. In the mills you mean? You know, I can't remember.

Y: No, before (--) Yeah, um, I mean that was long time ago. In 1935, in Roosevelt came in.

J: Yup. That's who(--) They should (--) The people, if it wasn't for Roosevelt these people wouldn't be what they are today. He's the one that did everything.

Y: It was the years 1935?

J: '35.

Y: So he brought Social Security.

J: He put the Social Security on. (Y: yeah) That anybody that worked would give so many, much, maybe pennies or whatever, if you put a penny the company had to put two. But if you didn't belong, like a lot of people were working in stores, right, their on store, they wouldn't even want to put that money out to the social security. When they retired they had nothing. You know what I mean? They were cutting their own nose.

Y: What about you?

J: Oh, we paid. I paid. I was the first one to go in, because we thought it was a good deal. And everybody, that was the union that did it too. Either we all did, but we did it because we figured, well it's money, it's money in the, you know, maybe some day they take care of us with that hope, and they did. If it wasn't for Roosevelt, today we'd be all without any, you know, we

wouldn't have a check. Some people don't realize that, how good it is now.

Y: Well that's why I asked you, because you mentioned that some (--)

J: That's true. Because if we didn't pay that money to the social security we wouldn't have a check now. And that's why we got to be careful. Now what happened, it went out of hand. Now when they borrowed that money from social security to pay, to put it on welfare, to put it on uh, they shouldn't borrow from security. That's money that all the people put in. It should go just to social security. Why borrow it from there? And then you saw that it was in the red a couple of years ago? It shouldn't have been. (Y: Umhm) You know what I mean? But if it wasn't for Roosevelt, I don't know.

Y: What uh, you don't remember when you got health insurance? (J: you mean from the?) The Blue, Blue, Blue Cross from the work?

J: Blue Cross, yeah. No, that, from work I think it went on, well I think it went on in the forties. I don't know. I can't tell you, because I'd be saying a lie. (Y: Yeah) But it must have been in the early, after the union came in. It must have been '38, '37. I don't know. I don't remember. Because we were young. None of us (--) The only thing I remember, for being out the Blue Cross paid for the hospital when I had my baby, for the child.

Y: Well that is the second baby?

J: Yeah. (Y: Or first?) I think the second, it started with the second. So my son is fifty (--) No, my son is how old is (--) My son is forty-six, my second son. The first one, no. It didn't, you had to pay your own. It happened they didn't have it then.

Y: Did you go to the hospital, or at home?

J: No. I had it at the hospital. My son. My son, my first son was at home. My second was at the hospital, because I was afraid to go at the hospital. They had the hospital, but I was afraid.

Y: So You got married 1932.

J: In 1934 I had my son.

Y: '34 the first son?

J: No, '34 going in '35. It was '34 though.

Y: Second son, or first son?

J: Um, first.

Y: First '34. And the second one?

J: Was seven years after. So it must have been '30, '39. I don't remember. [Laughs]

Y: '41.

J: '41, that's right. And then they, and then uh, I think there was a war then after that. (Y: Yeah, it was uh) Yes, a war, because my brother went to, to uh, there was a war.

Y: Second, The Second World War.

J: Yeah, it must have been 1945. I don't remember. (Y: Exactly) And uh, my brother went in as a guard and I took my mother in my house, because she'd be, my father was dead. So we made her break up home and we brought her in my house.

Y: Yeah. It must be, it must have been a good feeling to be paid you know, the insurance. I mean those changes, those kind of changes I want to hear.

J: Oh yeah, well that, that didn't go on until about (Y: 1941), yeah, just before then. Maybe if there was a big talk about it, but I don't remember what year we really had it. Of course it was good.

Y: Yeah. At the beginning when you started they could tell you go home, we don't need you, come back.

J: Oh yeah, but we still did that. Because if they didn't need you, but we didn't go every day. Like they'd say to you, you come next week, you come next week. And they'd give us turns. (Y: Right) You know what I mean?

Y: Did they have any kind of seniority kind of thing? Since you worked thirty years you could hired first, or (--)

J: Oh yeah. Oh yeah, there was seniority. Yeah, a little bit. Sure. I mean if there was and old worker, they'd pick the old worker first. (Y: Yeah) You know. But they give you a break. I mean naturally they (--) And sometime the new people, they'd send them out for good and they keep the old workers. (Y: Yeah) So I was an old worker. But I was always working. I, I, to tell you the truth I was never out of work that much unless I wanted to. Because if you're a good worker they always keep you.

Y: So when you were a younger girl, full of energy at the age of sixteen, and then later you married and had a first son, and second son. So I guess you did not sing much then? Did you change all the years?

J: To tell you the truth, no, no, not that much. (Y: You still could uh,) Oh yeah, I was always ready to go out.

Y: Yeah but did you go behind the machines and learn the (--)

J: Oh yeah, yes, yes. Oh sure. Yeah.

Y: [Unclear] the dance steps and uh (--)

J: Yeah, we did. I did anyway. I mean, because we were young. I mean what's the difference? (Y: Yeah) I didn't have the children with me. So I could do it. (Y: Right, right) In fact if somebody mind the children we were better off working, you know. (Y: Yeah. Did your) If you want more money you had to work.

Y: What did you do during the lunch hours?

J: Nothing. Well like I said, we, if anybody had their hair to fix, or something like that (--)

Y: Also later, I mean 1940's?

J: Oh yeah, they always did. (Y: Yeah) Yeah.

Y: Did you take your lunch with you, or(--)

J: Yeah, we took our lunch. We took a sandwich, or we'd go downstairs, they'd be a lunch cart go by. You know, a truck with the lunches. (Y: Uh huh) They sell ice cream, or whatever you wanted. Then that went on. That was a change that some people started it. They had like a cart. And they had all sandwiches. And they'd take them around. And they had uh, no, not coffee. They didn't make coffee, but they did have tonic and stuff. You know? That was in the late fifties! Late forties and fifties, you know?

Y: So when you started, I mentioned that in order to get time. Let's say 1930's. When you got thirsty what did you do? What, did you drink water?

J: There's water, fountain, water. There was a fountain. (Y: fountain over there?) Oh yeah, they had a fountain in every room. Two or three fountains, you know?

Y: When did the vending machines come in?

J: Oh, that didn't start until later. I don't remember when. You know, I don't remember when.

Y: Yeah.

J: No, not my second son, maybe the third. I you know, after that was the you know, the vending machines would come, you know. First we had to go outside. Then they decided to have one without the wheels, you know, that they could push around. And we went upstairs in the room.

Y: Umhm. Could you eat during the work?

J: Yeah. Nobody stopped you if you wanted to. If you have an apple or something, you eat it. Oh yeah. Nobody, I mean we tried not to be too you know, stop the machine and eat. (Y:

Right) If you were watching it and you wanted to take a little bite, we did. A lot of times we used to eat at the end. Like uh, we stopped the machine at twelve. Maybe at quarter of twelve we start eating, standing, and then probably we'd go out downtown. Because the Wood Mills wasn't that far, and we'd take a walk, you know? We used to do that. We had an hour then.

Y: Hour.

J: One hour. So you could do a lot in an hour.

Y: Some people say different nationalities prepared different sandwiches. Like Italians used garlic. Polish people used some kilbasa.

J: Kilbasa. Well we don't used garlic. The only, when we (--)

Y: I mean uh, or salami rather.

J: Oh salami, yeah! Yes, the Genoa salami [unclear].

Y: Yeah, what kind of sandwiches did you prepare?

J: Oh, you put your salad and your lettuce, and you put your salami, or ham. And the tomato, we wouldn't put it in, we put it on the side, or in the bag, because then it would get mushy. You know, and my, I remember my husband used to bring the bottle.

Y: Bottle?

J: A bottle. Well a regular bottle with the wide top. And if I had anything leftover from the night before, he'd put it in the bottle. And then at work they had the ovens, small ovens (Y: oh yeah) in a new room, in a room, and it used to heat up just enough. Not hot hot, but enough to heat up your, whatever you wanted to put in there.

Y: That's, that's the first time I hear that.

J: Yeah, see, well nobody mentioned it.

Y: When was that, I mean?

J: Well when I went to(--) They always had them since I can remember. And maybe (--)

Y: So at the beginning also?

J: No, in the beginning I, yeah. I don't remember the beginning, very beginning, but I do remember maybe in the forties. (Y: Forties?) Maybe they had them before that, but we didn't care. Probably I, like I said, had like a little room like that. And it had like an oven from there to there.

Y: Where was that? In the (--)

J: In the room, in another room. Like in a utility room. You know, something like that. And there would be an oven, and I don't know, the heat must have come from there.

Y: So you could not cook, but you could warm up?

J: No, no, warm up. Warm up. We had warm up. And we put it in there maybe half an hour before we ate. It depends.

Y: Yeah. Did you have refrigerators? Refrigerators?

J: No.

END OF TAPE I

TAPE II, SIDE I BEGINS.

Y: Maybe finish the um, you were telling me about no icebox at the Wood Mill.

J: There was no icebox. No refrigerator.

Y: Yeah. And if you had meat, or something, I mean salami, or any kind of pork uh, would get uh (--)

J: Yeah, I mean we'd put it maybe near the window. It would be cool. And then then it in the little ovens, we had ovens, long ovens that you put your own sandwich inside the oven. And then you pick it up at twelve o'clock and eat it. But most of the time everybody bought cold things, you know. They had sandwiches. I always had a sandwich. Ham, or something like that. I know it, when you come to think of it, now we wouldn't eat it. We didn't think nothing of it then. What were we going to eat? I mean either that, or starve.

Y: Right. What about telephone? Did you have?

J: Yeah. We, well telephones, I think they were before um, well when I was single there was telephone. Maybe I didn't have it, but the girl down, maybe one in the whole tenement had it. They could afford it. (Y: Yeah) You know, in the house. (Y: Right) Yeah. There was always you know, I think they put them on, I think it must have been about eighteen, eighteen or nineteen. I don't remember.

Y: I meant uh (--)

J: Maybe twenty-five. When I graduated we all had a tel(--) The girl next door had it. I didn't,

we didn't have it because my mother was alone. They had seven children. Probably they needed it. (Y: Yeah, umhm) But who you going to call? All your friends were around you. You know?

Y: Yeah.

J: You didn't care what the other people did. (Y: Yeah) I wanted a phone when I got married, because I called my mother. You know, after a year I was married we put a phone in.

Y: Yeah. What about at work? Did you have a phone?

J: Oh yeah, they had phones, but you, they didn't have them in the room. You had to probably go in the hallway. In the hallway probably there was a phone. But not in the beginning. I don't remember it in the beginning. Maybe in the '30, late '30's maybe they did have a phone. I don't remember before.

Y: So you could go and make telephone call later, or uh (--)

J: You have to(--) Well if it was important probably you could ask if you could make a phone call. The boss would send you out in the, in the main, you know, in the lobby. Or you wait till eleven o'clock when you were on your lunch time. Or twelve o'clock.

Y: Yeah. But they, could they call you from outside and say uh, (J: no, no.) your father is sick, please come, or?

J: Oh yeah, they'd call the boss. Probably they would, they would call the main office and report it, that you were called in. It had to be an emergency.

Y: Yeah, right. Right.

J: You know, but not for just to say bring the bread home. Chuckles (Y: Yeah) You know? That's what I mean. Nowadays everything is taken advantage.

Y: Yeah. Did you have a nickname at work? Or did you? Did you have a nickname at work? Did they call you with your name?

J: Um, at school they used to call me Ginger. (Y: Ginger?) I don't know why.

Y: Umhm. What about the different nationalities? Did you, some people said uh, she said uh, we used to call French, frogs.

J: Well if you talked about them, but we wouldn't unclear.

Y: I mean not towards uh (--)

J: Yeah. And they would say, the Italian people, they used to call them Warps. You know, but

that wasn't nice. I mean we, we didn't do it. Maybe other people did, but not in your face, unless they were mad. (Y: No, no, yeah) Probably they refer you to that. Or we call them frogs because they were French. I don't know what they used to call the Polish. Oh, square head, or something. I don't know. Stupid. It was kind of stupid. But (--) (Y: yeah, well it is stupid, but uh) That was, you know, it was just uh (--) And there wasn't that much of uh(--)

Y: Hostility? No hostility?

J: Not that much (Y: yeah) you know, unless we were working together, and then we were all friends.

Y: Umhm. Did you make good friends there in the mills?

J: Oh yeah, yeah! And we didn't (--)

Y: And did you go out (--)

J: To their house?

Y: I mean outside of the work, did you visit them, or they visited you, because (--)

J: Yeah, if they were very good friends we'd see each other, you know, but we mostly kept to the friends you have at home, you know.

Y: Yeah. When you said uh (--)

J: We used to go out at noontime with them, some, a few close friends. And the buses, then the buses used to come, trolleys. The trolleys were ten cents. Five cents, or ten cents, the beginning. And they'd be one going from [Prospect?] Hill and it used to stop right in front of the Wood Mill. You know?

Y: You walked to the work?

J: Yeah, we walked. My husband and I walked. (Y: From uh, ?) Well we always had a car. (Y: You did?) Yeah.

Y: But you preferred to walk?

J: No, because we used to put it away for January, February and March. The winter months were bad then. It wasn't like now. 1932, you know?

Y: Did it snow a lot?

J: Oh yeah! You couldn't see, you couldn't see across the street sometimes, because they used to have, they used to clean the sidewalk. So the snow from the street and the snow from the sidewalk used to pile up on each side of the you know, the street. So naturally, but we always

had a clean sidewalk. Better than now. Now everybody walks in the street. It's true.

Y: But at the beginning you walked though? You did not have a car?

J: We, well when I was single? (Y: Nineteen yeah, single) Oh yeah! I walked from Jackson Terrace to the Wood Mill. (Y: Yeah)
That's about a mile.

Y: And then everyone walked in those days.

J: Everybody walked, or take the bus, or take the trolley.

Y: Yeah. Yeah. And when you got married you did not have the car immediately, did you?

J: Yeah, as soon as we come back from, right away the first year. (Y: unclear) Yeah.

Y: I thought that was a hard year? Depression.

J: Yeah, I know, but we got it for fifty dollars.

Y: Fifty dollars a car?

J: I mean you know? (Y: Yeah) Yeah. We got a rumble seat. It was fun. We had top seats and a rumble seat. (Y: Yeah, right) That's our first car. Oh I remember the first car. And uh, I don't know if we paid (--) No, that wasn't fifty, maybe we paid a hundred dollars. (Y: Umhm) And uh, we used to go to work with that.

Y: Who drove?

J: My husband. He was always the driver.

Y: You did not, you did not drive?

J: No, not then.

Y: Yeah. And you were working, your husband was working.

J: Yeah, so we used to (--)

Y: Who did household at home?

J: Well we had no child(--) Housework?

Y: Yeah. Did he help you with cleaning, or (--)

J: Well I had, we didn't have any kids then. I did my housework on a weekend.

Y: He did not help with uh (--)

J: Well he was always in the barber shop. Maybe (--)

Y: Oh, he was (--)

J: Well at night. He worked Tuesday night. He come out of work and he'd go right straight to the barber shop.

Y: He had two jobs? (J: Yeah) Right. And you (--)

J: And I'd cook. And he'd come about six and we'd have dinner. And then probably sit on the porch and read the paper. And that's it. Or sometime we'd get the car and go buy an ice cream. We'd pick up the other girls, our friends, you know, and we'd go out and buy an ice cream, or go the Laughton buy a hotdog, go to the show. My husband used to go to the show three times a week.

Y: What show was that?

J: Oh we had a lot of shows that time. There was six, six shows on Broadway.

Y: I'm curious I didn't hear that before. About the show? I didn't know hear. Can you tell me? (Y: Theaters, theaters) Yeah, can you tell me a little bit more what uh (--)

J: Well we had a lot of theaters then. (Y: Yeah) We had six in a row on Broadway. One we had on unclear Street. Another one the strand. We had about, about nine in the city. (Y: Umhm. So) So we had plenty of shows to go to.

Y: Did you go over at the weekends, or during the (--)

J: No. My husband used to go on a Wednesday alone. He used to call me up and say Jennie, I'm going to the, is it okay? I says, yeah, why don't you go. I had the baby then. And he'd go to the show, because he used to love shows. (Y: Yeah) But then on a Saturday we couldn't go with him, because he used to work at the barber shop, but we'd go almost every Sunday.

Y: Who took care of the babies?

J: I'd give them to my mother for a couple of hours.

Y: Yeah. This unclear like theater place, or they were uh (--)

J: No movies, movies. Movies!

Y: Oh that's what you mean, movies.

J: Yeah!

Y: Well I thought it is uh, like play.

J: Well we had theater, we had plays. We had one, there was, they used to call it the uh, it was on Hampshire Street. I forget the name. The Empire. They used to have stage show. Like uh, we had the color guys you know, doing the step dancing. You know, once in a while. And Vaudevilles we had. More Vaudevilles. We had maybe one Vaudeville a week. You know, that one show had Vaudevilles, the other shows had silent movies then.

Y: Umhm, yeah. Yeah, silent movies.

J: Silent movies. No talking. The letters would come out.

Y: Did you like, (J: See I'm, huh?) Did you like those silent movies?

J: Well that's, oh yeah, that's what there was. Then when we went to the talkies we thought it was strange, because you know, when you talk you see their voice moving, then the words come out. And then you hear them talking. We were paying more attention to the voice than we were to the picture. (Y: Yeah) Until we got used to it. But it was good. Well we thought we were, woe, we thought we were you know, very advanced. (Y: Yeah) You know, naturally. I remember when they put the electricity in my house. I must have been about, I don't know if I was about thirteen, fourteen years old. You know, I don't remember before that. (Y: Yeah, it is hard) It's hard, but then I remember Jackson Terrace. We were one of the first ones to have electricity. But no, we had gas before that. You know? I didn't know how the pipes came, and then you light the gas and there'd be a little light there, and the ceiling, you know? And then, until you turn it out. And then I remember 19, I don't know if it was um, (Y: what years?) '18, maybe, I don't know. During the war. (Y: Yeah) The first, '18, '18 war. About that time, you know, they put the electricity on.

Y: Then you, did you have radio and things like that afterwards?

J: Yeah. Well I got my first radio when I got married. My uncle gave me a radio for a gift. My own. But at home we had the Victrola, the Victrola then, you know?

Y: Umhm, yeah.

J: We had one of those box ones with the thing. That's the old one.

Y: What uh, I'm not sure if I understood. What kind of thing? The old type of radio? (J: Victrola?) What kind of radio did you have? Regular box?

J: I had a regular (--) Well it was like a church. You know, like that? And it had the knobs.

Y: Knobs. Right, yeah.

J: But I was one of the first who had a radio, you know? Because my uncle gave it to me for a gift.

Y: Umhm. Yeah. And you mentioned the war. Um, you know, um, 1945. You know, Hitler.

J: That war. Yeah I remember. The other one I don't remember it that much.

Y: Did you notice any change then? Uh, did you work long hours, or overtime?

J: Well before that, before that was long hours. Then after the war they changed.

Y: After the war? (J: Yeah) After the war started, or after the war ended? Do you remember? Probably it is hard to remember. Yeah.

J: I don't remember. I don't know. I mean we had long hours before. Before the union came in we used to work 48 hours. And they went down to 40, you know what I mean?

Y: I thought when the war started the young men went to fight.

J: Yeah, but see I, I didn't have (--)

Y: You did not notice that?

J: I didn't have um, then (--) My son(--) What year? I don't even remember what son my year went in. Isn't that awful.

Y: Well this is a long time ago. I mean that's just uh (--)

J: You know? Yeah, he must have gone in the '49 or something. Uh, I don't remember, because he volunteered in the coast guards. No, he was um, no, what it is now? The planes, Air Force. (Y: Air Force) My son joined the Air Force, because he figured he would, after college he could go to school with them. You know, they put him through school and he was an instructor. You know. And when he come out he had a good job, because he started to work at the Singer when he was sixteen, part time. And like you said, he figured if he go to the service they give him four years of schooling. So he went to be a airline, you know, in the Air Force. And he was very good. He's got very good aptitude, you know, they go by that. And um, he was an instructor at, all the four years that he was in the service. (Y: Yeah) Then when he come back home he was, he met his wife there, she was a nurse. And uh, they come home and then they went back. He went back, because he had to finish the year, and he married a girl there, you know? And then they came here. And he was working in the Wood, in the um, not Raytheon, what did I say, Western Electric then? He only started to work there. And when he come back they gave him five years, as if he had worked five years. So that was good. So by the time he was fifty he had worked there thirty years. So he's retired now at fifty years old from Western, right, and they give him a pension, and he can't collect social security yet because he's not sixty-five. He's only fifty, fifty-four yet. So he thought this way I'll go back and get another job. So he, he's only uh, now he works at the um, uh, the Nuclear as a guard. So he gets his pension, and besides

working there, he works six hours a day. Not full, four to five, maybe six, I don't know.

Y: Does he have children?

J: He had four daughters.

Y: What do they do? Did they work?

J: Well they're all married now. His daughters are married. But in the (--)

Y: But they don't work.

J: Yeah, they're working. One of them is an engineer from the TT, you know, Telephone. And two are home. And the other has the bank, her husband has a bank, so they clean the banks. So she does that in between that she has the baby. See, she has a little girl home. They do all right. (Y: Yeah) My son, my other son is an engineer. (Y: Where?) At the Nuclear.

Y: They must be smart kids then.

J: And my other son is an engineer at Digital in the computer. (Y: Hm) And my daughter is an Executive Director of the Elder Service. (Y: Wow) Just me and unclear don't know nothing. [Laughs]

Y: Well you did a lot. [Clears throat]

J: Well yeah. I'm glad that they you know, they're all you know, thank god. Knock on wood. I really count our blessing. You know, you don't realize how lucky we are until we talk about it. I never think of it. You know? Too bad my father, my husband wasn't here to see them get you know, that good.

Y: When did he die?

J: It would have been in sixty-nine.

Y: 1969?

J: Christmas, yeah. Just before Christmas. Just before my daughter graduated from college. So he never had the chance, you know, to see that, the other tow.

Y: What was your husband's name?

J: Charles. Charles DiStefano. (Y: Charles?) Yeah.

Y: Italian origin.

J: Yeah. Yeah.

Y: I ask so many, so many questions, but what about the time clocks? When did you started punching in and out.

J: Uh, we never, we never had it in the Wood Mill. (Y: Never) No, no.

Y: Even at the end?

J: No.

Y: When you came late, what happened?

J: No, even when I come out of there we never had a time clock. What there was was a section hand would look around and see who was working, and they put the names down on this paper and give it to the boss. I never had (--) They, I remember that they said that the shoe shops had them. And maybe other mills. But the Wood Mill didn't have them maybe until the end, because after my third son I didn't go back, after my second son I didn't go back to work. I mean not steady in a mill. If I did I always went sewing or someplace in between, you know? Because my husband was fussy. I had to be home when the kids were home, you know?

Y: What about the section man, or overseers? What was your um, did you like them? The sec, what did you call them, section hand?

J: Section hands.

Y: Uh, overseers?

J: Overseers were the higher one. (Y: Higher one) The section hand, they put anybody on section hand that new a little, you know, that worked there in seniority. And if he got qualified they put him as a section hand, you know.

Y: Was he a nice person the section hand? Did you like him?

J: Well I really didn't have (Y: did he), some were tough. You know, what I mean to say, you know, they were (Y: Nasty) you know, make sure you weren't talking. We wouldn't let them catch us talking. You know, they didn't want you to hang around. They wanted you to do your work.

Y: Yeah. What did they do? I mean if they, if they caught other people doing other than what they're suppose to do?

J: Nothing. Well they'd send you off for the day. You know, probably they, (--)

Y: They could do such a thing?

J: They could do such a thing. They you know, what could you do?

Y: Just warned, and then (--)

J: Yeah, you make sure that they don't catch you next time.

Y: Could they fire you?

J: No, no, unless they had a reason, a good reason. Unless they talk to the overseer and say, you know, that girl doesn't do her work. They wouldn't fire directly, but next time there was work they wouldn't pick on you, you know what I mean? And they didn't do it outright unless they did something very bad, and then probably they'd fire you. You know, I don't know. I never had that experience.

Y: Did girls drink beer, wine in those days?

J: No, no. Not at work.

Y: Did they come in drunk? I heard that some German girls were so drunk, beer and uh (--)

J: Yeah but, yeah but Italian girls they didn't do that.

Y: They were solid, good catholic girls, huh?

J: Well we didn't. (Y: laughs) I'm telling the truth, nobody come in drunk. Maybe I, I don't think so. We never thought anybody would drink during the day, you know? Maybe if there was a holiday somebody would bring a little bottle. Then you'd get fired. If the boss caught you that you have a bottle, or something, and you have it to give it to your friends, probably then you'd get fired. You know what I mean? If they brought in a drink in, it was done undercover. Maybe a sip, but you don't get drunk with a sip. Like a holiday, or something, maybe somebody would bring you a bottle. And we all say happy holiday, and we all taste it. But like I said, it was, we don't do it out in the open. But if anybody was drunk they'd send them home. They wouldn't hire them. I mean they'd probably get fired.

Y: What about smoking?

J: Well you wouldn't smoke inside. You had to smoke in the bathroom, or in the hallway. They'd go outside.

Y: Did girls smoke in those days like they do today?

J: Yeah they did. More. I think more. (Y: Really) Because it was something that you don't do. You know what I mean? I mean the girls were forbidden to smoke. If she smoked she was bad. I mean to us. Our folks thought she was bad. If I took a smoke, I would probably take a puff when my mother and father weren't looking. But I never like it so I never smoked. I never smoked in my life.

Y: What other bad things uh, not you, but other people, other girls (--) I mean today you know, people do drugs, they do other things. What other bad things (--)

J: No, no. No, they just smoking and probably dating at night. Those people weren't considered good people. (Y: Oh yeah) Yeah, they weren't.

Y: Or dating other uh, nationalities?

J: Well no, that wasn't that bad, if the mother agreed that the guy was good. But a lot of people ran away to get married then. You know, they eloped, because they couldn't go out. And they eloped. But the reason there ain't such a thing now, I mean, it was different, a little different. But to me I think it was better that they were more strict in a way. (Y: Yeah) Because nowadays it's too, too much. (Y: too much) Oh yeah.

Y: I heard that french girls were loose, or they had (--)

J: Well they weren't, well more, not everybody, but I think they were more, because the, because their parents weren't as strict.

Y: What did it mean? I mean what it loose? Did they go, did they sleep with the (--)

J: Well no, no, no, unless nobody new about it, but not in the open.

Y: Well it doesn't mean, I mean when they accuse them being loose it doesn't mean that they slept with the guys.

J: No, maybe once, maybe, we don't know. You know, (Y: Right, those things) I mean nobody talked about it. The women only said that they used to go out with more than one guy. It was considered wrong. (Y: Right) If you dated one guy you stayed with one.

Y: You stick to him.

J: Yeah, and then we were brought up that you know, in a year we'd get, you would get engaged and then you get married if you like, if the folks like the guy and you liked them. There was trouble if they didn't like them. But eventually you won them. You, you know, you have to work at it. And, but like I said, they were, it was noted like that because they had more, more freedom, you know. That's what, some girls went bad in Italian. They used to go out, you know, go out on a date and maybe they didn't come home one night. They were considered bad. Of course. That's what, that's how it was! (Y: Right) And we thought it was, you know, that's the way it was so nobody did it.

Y: Yeah. Isn't it interesting that things change. You know, I guess you (--)

J: Well like now, now it's too changed.

Y: I mean you probably did not asked your daughter not to go out after seven o'clock in the

evening.

J: No. No, no, no.

Y: Although you couldn't go out, your daughter could go out.

J: Yeah. Well naturally there was a difference. And probably she'd go anyway. (Y: Right) You know, but they have to be a certain, she could go to the dance, but she'd have to be home at eleven o'clock. I still wanted to put my foot down, because you know, we were brought up like that. I mean they never stayed out after twelve, unless they were staying at somebody's house. And even my boys, I mean latest would be maybe after the dance, one o'clock. They went out with the girl after alone, because their mothers let them go out. Why should I keep my son home. I figure if he had a girl they could stay out till one o'clock it wasn't my problem. But I always used to say, be careful, you know? I mean because we were brought up like that. (Y: Right) So you continue. You know they're not going to do it, but at least you tell them, you know?

Y: Yeah. Did you go to Italy ever?

J: Uh, I went ten years ago. (Y: Ten years? To Sicily?) I never been (--) No. Well my daughter decided that the year that I retired, she says to me, if you want to go, shall we go to Europe and want to find your relatives? You know. She says Ma, you can walk good now. You know, why don't we do that, before she started this job. So we did. We went for three weeks. (Y: Where?) Sicily, Rome, all over.

Y: Did you like it?

J: Yeah, tremendous.

Y: Did you see any relatives there?

J: Yes. I went to find a brother, that was my mother's brother? She left him when he was three years old. Three, or four years old, and she never saw him again, until you wrote to each other. And we always had letters from him maybe once a year, twice a year. But I, I always kept his name in my file. And I called him, not that I called him, I wrote him a letter and told him I was going to come. And he invited me up his house. And that was my mother's house, because that was her house. (Y: Yeah) So I went to see them for one week. And then we went to Rome and visit Rome, the Vatican, all over.

Y: It's nice huh? I like it too.

J: Oh, I kept saying, why is everything so old, but beautiful? But that's in Rome. Well that's the thing. Over here they throw everything down. Oh I loved it! The churches! And Sicily. We went to uh, [Thurmina?] I don't know if you ever hear it. A resort in Sicily. It's something that you never saw in your life. The whole city, the whole resort is in the mountain. You know it? I can't explain it. You're in the mountain, you're looking at the ocean. It's the most beautiful,

beautiful thing.

Y: Now it sounds like paradise.

J: Like what?

Y: Like paradise.

J: It's beautiful! I thought Italy was fantastic. I say to them, how could my mother come to America? You wonder.

Y: Yeah.

J: You know, I mean (--)

Y: I understand, yeah.

J: There's beauty. (Y: Right, right) So before I went I studied, I looked at a lot of books, you know, where I wanted, what I wanted to see. And then I had a cousin that was a nun in Rome. She's still a nun, and went to visit her. And she showed us where to go and everything. In fact we stayed at the convent.

Y: Oh you did?

J: Yeah. Well they, (--) In the summer they could have visitors. So we stayed there two weeks. So it was better for us. We didn't have to go to a hotel.

Y: Yeah. When did you stop completely working at the mill?

J: Well I told you, before my second, after my second son.

Y: It was then? Oh, I didn't understand that.

J: Yeah, before my third son. I never went back.

Y: So it must have been in what?

J: When I was pregnant for my third son I never went back. You know, after he was born I didn't go back to the mills.

Y: Never again.

J: No, no.

Y: What did you do?

J: I stayed home until they were grown up.

Y: And then at some point (--)

J: At some point I went to work sewing where they sewed jackets, [unclear] jackets. And I used to put the lining. And after that I worked at [Russom?], clerk. And then I went to the wig place. Wigs, where they make the wigs. That's all. But I didn't go back to the mills. They were shut down by that time.

Y: Yeah, what was your reaction when they shut down? Did you feel that they uh (--)

J: No, there was [few words unclear]. There was the shoe shops. There was, then the [Pepperralli?] came in, and Greico. That was the clothing. So people, all the girls, there was no work in the Wood Mill, all my friends are all work, they all retired from there now. (Y: Yeah) Because they went to work right away in the sewing place. And they got hired, because that was the newest things around here, you know.

Y: Yeah. I guess what I'm asking is uh, as a former Wood Mill worker, when you heard that all these mills closed down (J: oh we felt back) and left, how did you feel? What was your response?

J: Well we were depressed. We'd say, well how is the people going to live? I mean how are they going to get any money? Well a lot of people like we said, we got compensation from the security. I men for unemployment. We go twenty weeks with pay, uh, which you had to go back. That's uh, that's about all. But then when you finish those checks you go for a job. We made sure that we'd find a job. You know what I mean? There was nothing, no other thing. Once your check finished nobody give you any money. Nobody went on welfare then. Oh, it was ashame, you know. Unless people were really poor.

Y: But I thought there was not too much jobs around, available.

J: There was uh, there wasn't much jobs, but like I told you, they have the WPA at that time. WPA was a government uh, they fixed the streets. And if my husband, one time he went. The mills had shut down for about nine weeks. So they had uh, I don't know, you had to go to the WPA and you signed in. And what they do, instead of giving you money for the week, you worked that week and you got paid. You work on the street, or they take you with the trucks and go to another place. My husband did it at one time, you know? I don't know how many weeks he did that.

Y: So you told me that you work at Western Electric.

J: Well that was at the end when my husband died.

Y: 1969?

J: Yeah. After 1970. And then by that time the um, Wigs was folding up, because they were

going, they were going to California, or Ohio.

Y: They moved out from here?

SIDE I ENDS
SIDE II BEGINS.

J: He had finished college, he was working. So I decided where they offered me a job I'd call them up and see what really they would do. Really they would do it. So I called the Western Electric, and I told them who I was. And I told them that so and so had come up my house. He gave me his name. And I would like to, I would like to see if they have something for me. So they told me to come in. So I didn't want to tell my children, because I figured they wouldn't hire me maybe. But I went in. And he hired me the same day. He told me to go to work, come to work Monday just like that. But I past the you know, like they give you an examination, eyes examination before you work. Ears. And uh, I got hired right away. So I only worked about a couple of years.

Y: What did you do?

J: Um, well I started as uh, they put me on I don't know, some kind of wiring. I only worked there for about a month, and then they put me in inspecting. You know.

Y: What did you inspect?

J: I inspected the coils. You know, they have some kind of (--) (Y: coins?) Coils. Little things like that. You know, things that they did, I had to see that they were sure they were soldered. You know, big [unclear] pieces. Little pieces of wire that the other people do, I'd take them and see that they were both soldered in each end and put them down.

Y: So that was your job?

J: Sorting. I mean inspecting.

Y: But you did not do it with a machine, and [few words unclear]? (J: No, no. No) With your eyes? (J: Yeah, yeah) And it took place (--)

J: Yeah, I'd take a bunch. Well we could take one at a time. But if you take few, and you look at the top, and you look at the bottom, you know.

Y: If it was loose, then you put it back?

J: If it wasn't soldered those would be out. I wouldn't put them into bags, because they'd put them in, probably they'd put them into telephones. I don't know where they'd put them these little coils, you know.

Y: You don't know how they used that?

J: I don't know where they used them, but I had to make sure that they were soldered on both ends.

Y: That was two years, that kind of a job.

J: Yeah, yeah. Well wherever they need you, they change you around, you know. Sometime I did one thing and other times (--) But most of the time it was inspecting after the end.

Y: Were you sitting, or standing up?

J: Sitting. You could sit and stand, what you want to do.

Y: Yeah. Was sitting down jobs at the mill more prestigious, or more uh (--) Some people talk about that one. She said, one of the ladies said, oh, I had sitting down job, I didn't go around.

J: Well probably. Well if a sitting down job was the ones that they had the spooling, they sit there like a desk, and they had all these spoolies coming down. And they had to sit down to watch them, if they didn't break.

Y: But it did not, it did not consider it as a high prestige job at the mill?

J: High prestige? Well no, all the jobs were all the same I think. Some are a little better. You know. A sitting down job was good if that's the type of job it was. If you got hired there. I mean it just happened every job is different. Like my job, what I did, I, I, I could sit, I could sit down. (Y: At the mill?) Yeah, oh yeah. We had a box that opened up. And we had all of our things in there, like yarn, things, you know, things you want to keep. And then we watched the machines. While the machines were going, we could sit down and watch them. And one broke. If you could see it, we'd stop the machine, fix it, and started again. Once in awhile we'd go up and down to see that they were all coming down good. But you didn't have to stand all day. Not my job, not that job.

Y: Right. And uh, was there any section hand, or overseer at the Western Electric? Did they check you whether you are doing your job well?

J: Well everybody has a section hand in each department. Everything is like that. Even now. You always, every department always has a second chief, or whatever they call them, you know. How can one guy in the office see anybody. So they all have different jobs.

Y: Yeah. Yeah. You were talking about the differences you were, you started and I interrupted you. How it was different working at the mill and then later Western Electric. What was that you were (--)

J: Well it wasn't noisy. The Western wasn't noisy. (Y: It wasn't?) No.

Y: Yeah. What other differences?

J: But everybody had a lot of different jobs, you know? I mean there's a lot of different jobs. Like my husband worked in the Western Electric after, because the mill shut down. And then it was tough. That was about in 1965. About.

Y: He started working?

J: No, no. He worked there 18 years in the Western Electric. So he must have been in the forties. I don't remember now. But my brother-in-law was an accountant there. He had gone to school, you know, he went to business school. High school and the business school. And he had a good job there. So he talked for my husband, and my husband went in. Because over forty they would hire them. I don't know why. I don't know, a certain age they didn't want them to get hired.

Y: At the Western Electric?

J: Yeah, in them days. That's why my (--) And then my husband got hired through his brother.

Y: Maybe because of the eyes so you could see well?

J: No, he had good eyes. I don't know, I don't know why. There was such a, I don't know why a certain age. They wanted younger people, you know, when it first started. But then they, now they got everybody, you know.

Y: Did they train you how to?

J: Oh yeah, yeah. You got about a month training. Oh they have to train you. How do you know what to do?

Y: I mean what, how to check the pieces at the Western Electric?

J: Well me? Well he told me to look at somebody else doing it first one day. And then you go on the other day. You go on.

Y: What was the one month?

J: No, well it maybe different things, you know? (Y: Yeah) But they won't give you more than a week training. I don't think so.

Y: Yeah. And the lady told me that whenever they gave me a raise she said, they expected me to work faster.

J: Well that's piece work. I don't know nothing about piece work. (Y: You don't) I never worked in piece work. That must have been the winding. But the machine only go that far, that

fast.

Y: Yeah, I guess they changed the speed, they shifted the gears.

J: Maybe they made, maybe they shifted the gears in the winding, but that was piece work. Anything with piece work. I never worked in piece work in my life. (Y: No) So I wouldn't know. Not even when I went sewing.

Y: Umhm. I guess those girls who worked piece work, they couldn't sing and dance either.

J: No! No, naturally.

Y: They did not have time for that kind of fun.

J: Now I know, my mother said to me that she worked in the winding before she went to the, when she was single. And all day long they kept going back and forth. Because the machines breaks, and the winding was fast. The spools were, not even ten minutes they fill up. So by the time that fills, the other one will be filling. So they'd go crazy. They went crazy there, but that was, that was piece work. But then when the first chance she went to this other department and she, she was, it was good.

Y: Yeah.

J: So every department was different.

Y: Different, yeah.

J: You know? Some department are hot. I don't know why they have to have a lot of heat. I could see them when they used to have, you know, the men would have probably work with their shirt clothes, you know? (Y: unclear) And uh, you know, because it was hot in the room. I don't know why. They used to call that english, english line was hot. And I don't know what other, I don't know, I don't remember. I don't know, because we only used to go by it, you know, and we could feel the heat perspiring. You know, to keep the yarn together I think, you know, because if it was cold it would split.

Y: Right. I think the yarn broke, or something.

J: Oh yeah, of course. In the beginning, yeah, of course it used to break. If it was too tight it would break. If it's too lose it would make coils. And then you had to tie it up. You know, it depends when you're, and it was twisting. How they turned the machine to twist it.

Y: Yeah. I made you tired.

J: I'm tired now, yeah.

Y: One more question. Did they pay better at Western? I mean did they give you insurance,

social security, all this stuff?

J: Oh yeah, they paid. Oh yeah, yeah, everything. Everything. You even get paid for your children. They even had dental. Now they passed it.

Y: I mean not now, but while you were working at Western.

J: No. Well they had insurance. No dental then.

Y: They had insurance?

J: Then the dental passed. My husband had insurance.

Y: But did you get better paid at Western?

J: Oh yeah! Well yeah, of course.

Y: I mean the amount was more, because in 1930's (J: Oh that's when the pays were) something was cheap. (J: Yeah, yeah) And for the same thing you paid more money.

J: Yeah, but we didn't have that Western Electric in the 30's.

Y: I know, but uh, (--)

J: See, it came late when there was good money. That's when they'd start paying good and all of the other places had to pay good. That's why everybody quit their job and went to Western. You know, if they could get a job they were lucky.

Y: Yeah, you said there were a lot of mill workers at Western Electric.

J: Well because they, the mills went out and they went to work there. They had to train them there. My husband went there. He never, he never worked in there. You know? (Y: Yeah) He was a barber, but then he didn't want to be a barber all day, because barbers didn't have no security. So he figured he had a family, so he did it on spare time.

Y: Yeah. Well thank you so much. I learned so much. It was really valuable and I really thank you.

J: Okay.

Y: Although I made you tired.

J: Well no. You get tired because we've been here since this morning.

Y: It's uh, yeah, well uh (--)

end of tape.